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SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

August 15, 2021

Masks are Still in Vogue

Mask on! Mask off! Mask on! Mask off! I continue to keep a mask in all my pockets in case I forget to take one with me (I have a nice collection of masks). But the decision of when to wear them gets a little confusing. Living in the south, our vaccination rates are low (mask needed), but I am surrounded most of the time by folks who are vaccinated (mask not needed). Yet, caution is the name of the game when I am out and about!



There were six children/youth at Pleasant Hill Community Church, TN this morning. Most of the congregation had not physically seen them since last March. But they were there with their masks on to share their summer camp experience. Two things went through my mind as I saw them lined up front: first, I could not believe how they had changed since last March – definitely taller and there were surprising changes in the hair style! Second, how sad that they need to wear masks to school and other places because too many adults are not vaccinated.

For me the mask has become a symbol of caring for other people and this is good. Then I watch the news – the fires in the west, the earthquake in Haiti, the floods in Europe, the war in Afghanistan and so many other tragedies and experiences of trauma. I realize that it takes more than wearing a mask to show I care about people.

So, I take a deep breath and let out a sigh, and I pray: I lament that life seems overwhelming at times; I confess to God that I want to do more and don't always know what; and I express thanksgiving and joy knowing that

God understands my fears and despair. I am grateful that God continues to be the ground of my being.

Then I put my mask back on, go about my day, and look for signs of how I can embody the spirit of God - even through the mask. God is indeed with us!

Blessings! Char Burch

News from the Conference Office

Celebrating an Ordination and two Installations

The Commission on Ministry has been hard at work the last couple of months and we have a number of opportunities in the coming weeks to celebrate the ministries happening in the Southeast Conference.

- Ordination of Tonya Barnett on August 22, 2021
- Installation of Rev. Dr. Valencia Jackson on August 22, 2021
- Installation of Rev. Courtney Jones on September 11, 2021

Learn more about these ministers [on our website](#).

Clergy Zoom Connections for August

- **An Hour of Conversations and Prayer**
Tuesday, August 17, 24, 31 - 11:00 a.m. Eastern (10:00 a.m. Central); Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/479440102>
- **Live Harp Meditations for Ministers**
Thursday, August 19 - 12:00 p.m. Eastern (11:00 Central)
20 minutes of meditation with Celtic harp. Silent prayer and reflection following if desired, facilitated by Rev. Jean Norton. (For questions or to sign up for individual Therapeutic Harp Sessions, contact Jean at HeartSongJean@gmail.com.)
Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/96976838422>
- **Especially for Specialized Ministers**
Tuesday, August 24, 2021 - 9:30 a.m. Eastern (8:30 a.m. Central)
Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/354744689>

Re-Opening of Churches – Conversation for all Church

Leaders

- **Monday, August 23 - 7 pm Eastern/6 pm Central**

Many churches are moving to in-person worship. This is an opportunity to learn about each other's experiences, recommendations, etc. We invite all Moderators, Church Leaders, and Clergy to be part of the conversation. [REGISTER](#)



Prayer List

We are continuing the process of praying for authorized ministers, congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2021. We encourage you to include these prayer requests in your local church newsletter, share them with your prayer circle, and include them in your own prayers.

Week of August 15

- First United Church of Christ; Sweetwater, Tennessee
- Tommy Hill
- Stanley Roat
- G. Lind Taylor

Week of August 22

- Pilgrim UCC; Birmingham, Alabama
- Walter Brueggemann
- Patricia Robbennolt
- Ralph Thompson

Week of August 29

- Fairfield Glade Community Church; Fairfield Glade, Tennessee
- Reginald Holloway
- Cameron Trimble

Prayer Concerns

Please keep in prayer **Rev. Bob Rezash** (retired) whose twin brother, Larry, passed away on June 30.

Churches in Transition

First Congregational, Montgomery AL; First Congregational, Savannah GA; Trinity Congregational, Athens AL; Rush Memorial, Atlanta GA; United Church of Cookeville, Cookeville TN; Holy Trinity Community Church, Nashville TN; First United Church, Belvidere TN

News from the Wider Church



Southeast Conference Retired Clergy Arrested in DC

The Rev. Susie Smith, a retired UCC minister who traveled to D.C. from Greenville, S.C., recently participated in the Poor Peoples Campaign as they pressed for voting rights and a \$15 minimum wage. While protesting she, along with hundreds of others, was arrested by Capitol Police.

"Rather than guarding the privilege of the few, Jesus of Nazareth and the great prophets of all faith traditions call upon us to share power, wealth and all the resources that have been entrusted to us," Smith said.

"We still believe in the vision of a Beloved Community filled with justice, mercy and compassion for all. We marched on Monday to remind ourselves that we cannot become complicit with the increasing hostility, hatred, violence and division that tear at the fabric of our society."

[Read the full article on the UCC website.](#)

2022 UCC Health Plan Premium Rates and Plan Enhancements

by Frank E. Loiacono, The Pension Boards

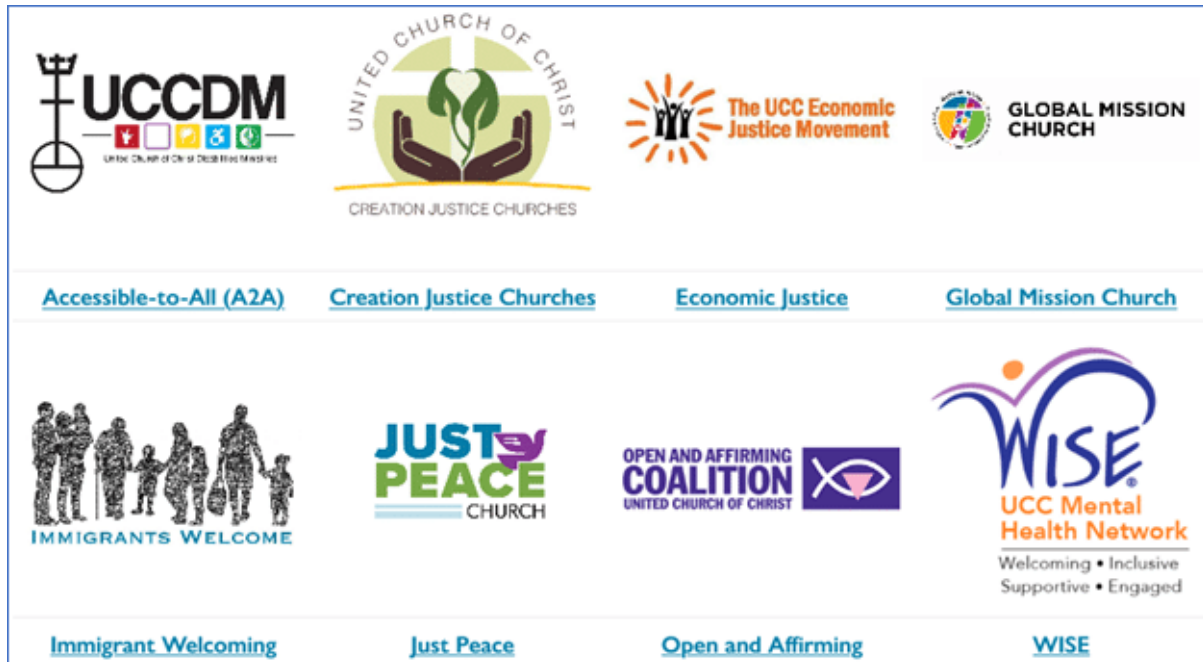
We are pleased to announce the following premium rates and plan enhancements for the 2022 Plan Year, **effective January 1, 2022:**

- Non-Medicare Plan: 5% increase (no change to co-pays and deductibles)
- Medicare Advantage Plan w/Rx Plan: no change (no change to co-pays and deductibles)
- Dental Plan: no change
- Vision Plan: no change
- Life and Disability Plan: no change

The following benefit enhancements are **effective January 1, 2022:**

- UCC Dental Plan: Increase dental annual maximum benefit from \$2,000 to \$2,400
- UCC Vision Plan: Increase frame allowance from \$150 to \$170

As is our customary practice, churches, employers, and individual plan participants will receive detailed information later this fall regarding applicable rates and benefit enhancements. Please feel free to contact me with any questions at floiacono@pbucc.org or by phone at 212.729.2806.



‘How can you tell a church is UCC?’ New web page has 8 ways

“How can you tell a church is UCC? There are many ways. One of them is by the commitments it makes.” Those words kicked off a recent video introducing a United Church of Christ “Just World Covenants” web page. The new “online hub of justice resources” is a collection of all the special “covenant” programs that local churches can belong to. It’s the first time these programs — some of them in existence for decades — have all been listed, with links, in one place. [Learn more on the UCC website.](#)

News from our Local Churches



Cookeville Congregation Provides Backpacks to Kids

Members of the United Church of Cookeville recently delivered 48 backpacks to five Putnam County (TN) elementary schools. Copy paper and sanitizing supplies, earbuds, and other supplies were also provided to some of the schools.



United Church of Huntsville helps those displaced by COVID-19 with food—and hospitality

Following the closure of the building due to COVID, the United Church of Huntsville was able to start a community food pantry to support those in need in the city and beyond. To this point in 2021, some 16,500 persons/households have been served with nourishing food, which at the pantry's peak, was distributed twice weekly. An additional 2,000 have been served via a small enclosed pantry box outside the UCH building. [Read Mike Stroud's article on our website.](#)



5th Annual Shrimp Boil Raises over \$1,250 for Back Bay Mission

Back Bay Mission is thanking Pleasant Hill Community Church for hosting a drive-thru shrimp boil to raise funds to help strengthen neighborhoods, seek justice, and transform lives. Just announced is a net profit of over \$1,250.00 to be sent to Back Bay Mission. The Pleasant Hill 2021 Shrimp Boil team sold out 50 'take-out only' tickets in 3 days and on July 31 an additional 25 volunteers had a blast getting the shrimp dinners packed up and handing them out in the makeshift drive-thru. It was a superb team effort from all who donated their time, bought tickets, cooked, planned, and who participated in any way. Special thanks go to Jean Nelson for the photos and Dave & Loretta Heigle for coming over from Ohio to boil the shrimp! This generous donation will make a difference in people's lives on the MS Gulf Coast! Church member, Mary Ruth, Back Bay Mission Board Member 2016-2022, led the team and appreciates the support!

Trainings and Conferences



Healthy Boundaries for Retired Ministers

Retired ministers who do not serve as pastors in a local church but who may preach periodically, officiate at weddings, funerals, etc. now have the option to attend a special Healthy Boundaries Course focused on issues faced by retired ministers. The course fulfills the four-year requirement for Southeast Conference clergy. (Fee is \$35). The online course will be held August 18, 1-4 pm Eastern/12 pm-3 pm Central. [REGISTER](https://us17.campaign-archive.com/?u=01d4c5139f7be9d4d4ff4c63a&id=992ef127d1)

Healthy Boundaries 101 Offered in September

The training sessions are offered Fridays from 2:45 pm-6:15 pm, and Saturdays from 8:45 am-12:15 pm. You must attend both sessions in order for the training to count toward Authorization Requirements for Ordained, Licensed, and Commissioned Ministers. The available sessions are scheduled for [September 18-19](#) and [November 5-6](#). You will need to pick which of the sessions you want to attend. The fee is \$75. You can either pay online at <https://www.secucc.org/giving/donate/>. Choose "other donation" and be sure to list Healthy Boundary Training on the line provided. Alternatively, you can send a check to the Southeast Conference at PO Box 1950, Decatur GA 30031. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Rev. Heather Fosburgh at hfosburgh@secucc.org or call 404-719-6572.



Cultivating Generous Congregations Seminar Starting Soon

Can fundraising be ministry? Can stewardship be spiritual? The Cultivating Generous Congregations Seminar this fall offers an opportunity for pastors and lay leaders to explore faithful, practical, and tested ways to promoting generosity in our congregations. We will draw on current research, seek guidance from the wisdom of scripture, and discuss the best practices in church-based fundraising. Pastors and leaders participating in this program will be equipped to lead an effective stewardship campaign and, more broadly, help their congregation reclaim generosity as a spiritual practice. The seminar meetings will be held on Tuesdays – Sept. 21, Oct. 5 & 19, and Nov. 2, 16, & 30. Seminars run from 6:30pm to 8:00pm Eastern Standard Time. There will be readings, videos, and reflections to complete in-between seminar meetings. The program costs \$300 for a team of two leaders (additional participants \$150 each). Learn more and register by Sept. 14 at: <https://cvent.me/VnEgLK>

They knew: 50 years of the U.S. government causing the climate crisis

The UCC's next Creation Justice Webinar will feature one of the leading voices in environmentalism over recent decades: James Gustave Speth. Among his many accomplishments, Speth served the Carter administration, founded the Natural Resources Defense Council, and spent 10 years as Dean of the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. In August, he is releasing a new book entitled, *They Knew — The U.S. Federal Government's Fifty-Year Role in Causing the Climate Crisis*. Naomi Klein has described it as "a damning record that will become a potent tool for justice." Even if you can't make the scheduled time of 1 p.m. ET on Wednesday, Sept. 8th, sign-up anyway, and we will send you a recording.

[REGISTER](#)

Conference Calendar

August 17 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EDT

[Clergy Conversations via Zoom](#)

August 18 @ 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm EDT

[Healthy Boundaries for Retired Ministers](#)

August 19 @ 12:00 pm - 12:30 pm EDT

[Live Harp Meditations for Ministers](#)

August 19 @ 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm EDT

[Commission on Ministry Meeting](#)

August 22 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EDT

[Ordination of Tonya Barnett](#)

August 22 @ 5:00 pm - 6:00 pm EDT

[Installation of Rev. Dr. Valencia Jackson](#)

August 23 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EDT

[Re-Opening of Churches – Conversation for all Church Leaders](#)

August 24 @ 9:30 am - 11:00 am EDT

[Zoom Conversation for Specialized Ministers](#)

August 24 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EDT

[Clergy Conversations via Zoom](#)

August 31 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EDT

[Clergy Conversations via Zoom](#)

View the **full calendar** of events online: <https://www.secucc.org/events/>

Contact Us

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